Restart

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Restart

by EarthsickWithoutYou

Summary

After the break-up scene in "Digestivo," Will finds Hannibal crying in his yard. What's to be done about that?

"Life would be so much simpler if you liked the right people—the people you're supposed to like. But then I guess there'd be no fairytales."
-- Doctor Who

Well, good, he was gone.

Good fucking riddance.

Will had to force the thought; it wasn't how he really felt but how he *should* feel. He'd always rather monumentally sucked at having the right feelings, the ones that could save you when it counted.

That might explain why he was still staring at the door.

For a while he stayed there, feeling like a slack-jawed idiot in his small bed with its rickety frame and flat mattress, a bed he had chosen to prevent himself from ever getting too comfortable. He lived always in a sort of dazed paranoia, or he had before Hannibal. Being with Hannibal made everything black and white spring into vivid color; it made life clear and gave Will the inevitable urge to punish himself again.

Maybe that was why he made Hannibal leave, he considered as he stretched and got up out of bed, patting down his soft flannel shirt, shivering. Hannibal had touched him, out of necessity in cleaning and reclothing him; those big, sensuous, deadly hands must have been all over his skin. Distractedly, he processed the feeling of his heart skipping the beat Hannibal owned, and the way his breath caught at the idea of being handled like that, naked and at the killer's mercy. The way Hannibal had finally shown full and sincere mercy, not like before. He could have killed Will very easily, but had chosen to be so gentle. Another game? He tried to convince himself it must be.

If sending Hannibal away was a punishment for Will, it might explain the way he spent the whole rest of the day, doing absolutely nothing effective. He paced the house in a near-frantic state of confusion, tugging at his hair, biting his lip, driving his nails into his palms to leave raw, red half-moons on the already battered, dry skin. He was a fucking wreck from head to toe, as a quick glance in the mirror revealed. For his collection, he had acquired a new, angry red cut across his forehead that was going to leave quite a scar. The scabbed-over cut made him tremble when he traced it with one finger, new ghosts swimming in his luminous but miserable blue eyes. He ached.

Hannibal must be long gone by now; there were plenty of ways he might once again slip away from the authorities and find a new beginning. Will had lost track of all the times he'd had to start over again lately himself. With every Will Graham who died, he stepped out of the dead skin suit to become someone new, but no incarnation had yet matched the truth. It was a lonely way to exist, as isolating as a little rustic house in the middle of nowhere with a small, empty bed and no sound of happily barking dogs to ease the nauseating sense of *nothing*, nothing to hope for.

By nighttime, this line of thinking had him so depressed that he threw his coat on, resolving that a walk through the frigid woods might snap him out of this soul-enveloping melancholy for which he could never summon a name.

He made it into the front yard by the time he heard the strange sound, like a creature choking on its every breath, worn down by heaving sobs they were powerless to stifle. Half-expecting a stray dog had wandered onto his property and gotten frightened, Will went into the side yard, boots crunching in the snow. The downy fresh flakes melted against his glasses so that when he came upon the crouched figure keening with pain, he couldn't discern its identity at first. He took off his glasses and wiped them quickly clean again, squinting at the figure of a strong but shuddering man convulsing in the snow, unable to hide in the silvery cast of moon-glow.

The man noticed him all of a sudden and scattered back, horrified, like a spooked animal. He headed for the shadows, and Will recognized the man was having a severe panic attack. As hard as it was to equate the fact with the simple reality of the situation, the man was Hannibal.

Will had dismissed him so aloofly, with painfully calculated meanness, but...he...he was still *here*...hours later. He must be freezing to death, and so soon after the bloody battle of this day...something had torn him asunder into a personal hell. Will stared in utter astonishment.

He was curled up into a tight ball under the nearest tree, shaking and sobbing, letting out a broken moan of despair that snapped something loose in Will's heart, intensifying the ache until he could do nothing but drop to his knees before Hannibal and reach out for him.

The best he could do, given the profound agony of trauma he hadn't even metabolized from the bone saw and then Muskrat Farm, was to clutch at the edge of Hannibal's coat and give a short tug, "Hey."

"Go away," Hannibal sniffed, clamping his eyes shut and burying his face.

"I thought you'd be gone by now," Will shrugged. He sat in the cold snow beside Hannibal as if this was a normal conversation, but it didn't calm him down; inside he was almost as wretched as Hannibal, but shock wouldn't quite let him break down.

Hannibal snarled, then let loose a long, turbulent tirade in Lithuanian, and despite the fact that he could tell the words were angry and barbed, probably even replete with swears, Will couldn't help noticing how lovely that deep, rumbling voice was when it spoke Hannibal's native tongue.

Finally, Hannibal had to stop ranting in order to breathe. Eyes red and piercing, he glared at Will. When he raised his head a bit further, Will saw his soaking wet face, tears sliding down elegant cheekbones and staining plush lips. He had never imagined what it would be like to see Hannibal cry this hard; perhaps he never wanted to admit his nemesis was so fully human, so vulnerable. Now he looked frail.

"Okay, and in English?" Will prompted.

“Where else would I go?” Hannibal said hoarsely. He started to rock himself, shaking his head, muttering, “*Where else would I go?*”

“I thought you’d, I don’t know...run. Find someplace new, start over.”

“Without you?” Hannibal said, shivering. “Why?”

“We’re survivors. I guess that’s why.” Will couldn’t ignore the way Hannibal’s words made him blush in spite of himself and despite the intense concern making his hatred and resentment for recent events start to melt like an insubstantial disguise covering a much deeper feeling, a longing that couldn’t be killed. His heart slammed his ribcage; his hands yearned to pull Hannibal close.

“I’m tired of surviving.” Hannibal’s eyes burned and he swiped at his nose like a child.

Will sighed. Reaching into his coat pocket, he found a packet of tissues and passed them to his enemy. Then he stood up, glancing from the huge full moon back down to the cannibal having a nervous breakdown in his yard. The serial killer who prized Will’s presence above everything else, finally, even self-preservation. They breathed in long white puffs of bitter-cold air for a while, in and out, alone together. Hannibal blew his nose and pouted as he pocketed the rest of the tissues. He started to rock again but that wouldn’t keep the cold out for long. Will’s bones felt ready to crack with the iciness of the night.

Finally, he reached out his hand again, this time towards Hannibal’s hand. “Come on.”

Hannibal looked up at him, completely baffled, and Will realized he wasn’t fully cognizant of what was happening; he was still stuck in the grip of panic which had made him regress into a big child.

“I said come on. Take my hand.” When Hannibal surrendered his hand, Will found it was wet with tears, rough with the callouses he’d earned during the doubtless vicious exit from Muskrat Farm.

Will heaved him to his feet, no easy task since Hannibal weighed more than he did and barely dedicated any effort towards the motion. “C’mon, help me, get moving, snap out of it.” Will realized he sounded too stern; that wasn’t going to motivate the killer in his current state. “Hannibal, please,” he amended softly, the words tugging his own heartstrings. It felt natural to be gentler. “Please.”

Hannibal blinked, snow dusting his hair and sticking in his light eyelashes. His eyes were deep and dark, lancing into Will.

Will squeezed his hand. “Jack will be here soon. It’s only a matter of time. We should be gone.”

The word “we” roused Hannibal slightly from his daze. He nodded and followed, letting Will guide him into the car. Neglected for months, thankfully it started up just fine and still had a full tank.

Hannibal stared out the window, sullen, as if he refused to hope this was what it seemed. He was so tired, and that was something Will could entirely relate to.

“Wait here,” he said after driving into North Carolina, where he stopped at a 24 Hour Walmart. For three hours there had been nothing between them but the dark highway, classic rock radio, bright snow-fall and a tension that sat heavy in Will’s stomach like a thundering elation under a weighted blanket of dread and caution. What the hell was he doing?

They hadn’t spoken the last time Will stopped, which had been at a gas station so they could use the restroom. Now Hannibal suddenly grabbed his hand and looked at him anxiously, eyes bright.

“I’m going in there to get us some supplies; just wait here and relax. It’ll be safer if we’re not seen together now.” He grabbed a baseball cap from his glove compartment and put it on. “I think I’ll be fine if I keep my head down and use the self check-out.”

Hannibal hadn’t let go of his hand. Will fought back an irrational inspiration to kiss those scabbed knuckles.

“Hannibal, it’s okay. We’ve come this far, I’m not walking out on you now.”

Common sense seemed to win over as Hannibal swallowed past a lump in his throat. He withdrew his startled gaze and cast it again languidly out the window where random late-night shoppers wandered towards the entrance. Will patted his shoulder, and it was awkward on his part, but this made Hannibal relax his posture slightly. Will smiled.

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“Alright, this is a pretty good criminals-on-the-lam starter kit, I figure,” Will announced. He spread the contents of his Walmart purchases onto the bed in their motel room.

Hannibal hadn’t questioned him when he purchased a room for the night with a king bed rather than two separate ones; after all, it would be far less suspicious for a couple to be renting the room instead of two single men, which is what Jack thought they were. Were they?

“I don’t know, you’re the expert, what do you think?”

Hannibal surveyed the assortment of clothing, hair dye kits, tinted contacts lenses and accompanying solution, as well as hats and reading glasses before bestowing a brief nod.

Will felt an unaccountable temptation to break through Hannibal’s stony composure and make him laugh. Instead, he blurted on, “Think we can get some fake id’s made around here somewhere?”

“You know we can. It’s easy to find someone to provide counterfeit identification. A mere internet search with the correct search terms will uncover dozens of options to suit that goal.”

“I know you know I know that.” Will hooked his hands in his jeans’ pockets and smirked. “But that’s the most you’ve said to me in hours, and I wanted…”

The smile faded slightly from his face as he realized what the end of the sentence would hold if he was going to be honest. Clearing his throat, he said gruffly, “I missed your voice.”

Hannibal made no attempt to take advantage of the momentary lapse into sentiment on Will’s part; instead, he nodded and continued with an air of dedicated camaraderie, “I’ll cut my hair, dye it black.”

Will picked up the box of hair color and read the instructions, mainly to give himself something to do other than saying something really stupid and tender or acting on his continual secret craving to touch Hannibal and never stop. “Says here you should wash your hair right before dying it.”

“Yes, I’ll get started.” Hannibal gathered the dye box and scissors, then headed to the bathroom, which was simple and confining but clean enough not to offend his delicate sensibilities too much. The same really couldn’t be said for the jumbo-sized bottle of men’s Pert Shampoo + Conditioner from Walmart, but Hannibal would just have to work with what they had.

Will stood with his hip against the doorframe and scratched his jaw. “I can do it for you,” he announced, making Hannibal glance at him in unfiltered surprise. “Here, I’ll grab that chair from the other room.”

He set the chair in front of the sink and Hannibal sat down, looking up at him in bewilderment, incapable of refusing any of his whims. It was a nice feeling of power over his former adversary, one Will could get used to. It only seemed fair, after all, given how completely Hannibal had upended his dreary destiny, that the feeling should be mutual.

Hannibal took off his shirt, which only made sense given what they were doing, but Will’s fingers shook as he wrapped a towel around the older man’s shoulders. He kept his eyes on Hannibal’s so they wouldn’t wander, but that didn’t make him any less nervous. His hand brushed against a swell of brutalized skin and he pulled the towel away, his eyes flying to the reflection of the big Verger brand on Hannibal's beautiful back. He winced, wanting to pour out so much comfort that he didn't know where to start.

"Jesus," Will sighed, "I'm sorry. That must have hurt like a motherfucker."

"I've had worse," Hannibal answered with quiet melancholy, and this time Will could not deny him his bitterness; it felt just as earned in that moment as his own.

“Why are you doing this?” Hannibal asked, finally, unable to resist. *This,* meaning more than the hair washing and sympathy. It meant the running away like forbidden lovers in the night.

His panicked, childlike state had faded into his normal mindset by the time they had been on the road long enough to know Will was serious about them leaving together. But he was still uncertain; Will could guess at the remaining doubts on his mind: would Will help him to escape again, then disappear from his life? If they left the country together, would Will come to regret the choice and suddenly abandon him?

Will had to admit these were well-founded fears. He had been a lot of things to Hannibal in the past, but dependable had never been one of them. Yet...maybe now that he had a chance...if the pointless, hurtful games were really over...

“I want to do something for you,” he decided, finding a way at last to define his own motive. "And for us."

He put the towel back around Hannibal's shoulders, very careful in his movements not to place any pressure on the brand. “Here, lean back.”

Will took a moment to glance at Hannibal's face, then his own reflection, the way their features were still scattered with rough scabs. He should stop again before they tried anything so daring as the airport, to get some make-up to dab over the distinguishing marks of the recent struggles they'd both submitted to, tussling like fools over the same wild instinct to find each other and hold on much too tightly.

Will tipped Hannibal’s head back over the sink and ran warm water over his hair, finding that he enjoyed the sensation of moving his own wet fingers through the silky, thick locks.

“I thought you never wanted to see me again.” Hannibal’s eyes were closed, fingers tensed on his knees, twitching.

“I was mad when I said that and you know it,” Will chided. He massaged shampoo into Hannibal’s hair and huffed a sigh. “You’ve hurt me so much. So many times. But today you saved me. Maybe I don’t know why, maybe I wanna know.”

“You do know, you just want me to say it.” Hannibal frowned, but he had relaxed again into Will’s guidance and the soothing sweep of long, capable fingers in his hair.

“Fair enough. Sorry you didn’t get to eat Mason or Cordell, by the way. I’m assuming there couldn’t have been time.”

Hannibal chuckled, a low, small thing, but his smile was worth everything, every moment of misery Will had endured at his hands and as a result of the killer’s mere existence. “At least you got a chunk out of Cordell.”

Will chortled in response, then hummed thoughtfully as he rinsed Hannibal’s hair out. “Your roots are grey,” he noted without judgement.

“Yes, they have been for years.” Hannibal blinked up at him as Will guided him back up into a straight sitting position. He began towel drying Hannibal’s hair as the older man watched him, pensive. “I felt uncertain if you would like the way it looked, if I stopped coloring it.”

“And that influenced your decision on the matter?” Will looked down at him mildly shocked.

“Of course.” Again, he was visibly anxious, but honest and open. It made Will ease up on his nearly interminable state of self-deception, too.

Will kept rubbing the towel over his hair, melting into a self-conscious smile. “I think you would look good with grey hair. By the look of it, it would actually be silver. I, uh.” He

cleared his throat again as Hannibal looked at him, riveted expectantly. “I think you would look very handsome.”

“Oh?” Then such a warm smile, it took Will’s breath away. The cute creases at the corners of Hannibal’s cinnamon eyes were a particular favorite feature, although he had never let himself dwell so much on the endearing details that defined his enemy’s undeniably fascinating face.

“Very *dignified*,” Will laughed, ruffling Hannibal’s hair, getting it messy.

Hannibal did laugh then, a beautiful, golden sound, like music. Will kissed him all of a sudden, right on the lips, then inside them, softly raw and open. Hannibal’s arms came up around him and he moaned into Will’s mouth. The small cry was almost as pained as the way he had whimpered and sobbed in Will’s frosty yard, and Will understood why. This kind of happiness was too much, overwhelming, world-shaking. It hurt.

They kissed like that for a while, tongues stroking desperately together, teeth nipping at each other’s lips, Hannibal clutching onto him in an unspoken plea that Will not let go. The position was awkward, so Will dragged Hannibal up with him, keeping their mouths pressed feverishly except when he had to glance around to make sure they were correctly on course for the bed.

“Lie down,” he muttered, and Hannibal obeyed, soon flat on his back, half-naked with a throbbing bulge standing out beneath his trousers. His eyes on Will were more devoted than a priest kneeling for solemn prayer.

Will’s vision was fogged with tears as he fumbled for the items he’d bought at the store earlier without asking himself why. He returned to the bed and placed the box of condoms and the bottle of lube beside Hannibal, then stepped back and undressed, piece by piece, slowly unravelling himself before those lust-drenched brown eyes that had him hypnotized.

“Just this,” Hannibal requested huskily, handing Will the lube and shoving the condoms away, bossy as ever, but so tender and needy that Will smiled, nodding. He wasn’t going to question a want he understood too well.

"Are you okay like this?" Will asked as he hovered over Hannibal, his face etched in concern. "Your back..."

"I'm perfectly comfortable," said Hannibal, reaching for him. Will thought Hannibal would have let him do whatever he liked, but that he had chosen this position with purpose, finding the comfort he spoke of in again allowing Will to be in charge.

It was a strange feeling to be astride Hannibal, on top and dominating, unaccustomed but so naughty and arousing that Will growled as he ground their hips together, feeling their erections brushing as Hannibal made another lost, begging sound that drove him crazy. Somewhere in the glorious mess of it all, he managed to get Hannibal's trousers and underwear off. It was a challenge, since Hannibal’s hands were all over him, roving over his biceps and squeezing, tracing down his spine, groping his ass. He sighed in worship, “Will, you are truly stunning...you amaze me.”

“You’ve seen me naked before,” Will smirked between kisses. He pinned Hannibal’s hands down with a teasing glimmer in his dark blue gaze.

“But I couldn’t touch you, not the way I wanted to. How I’ve always wanted.” the killer’s breath halted along with Will’s heart, skittering to a stop, then hammering harder than ever.

He let go of Hannibal’s wrists and said roughly, “Touch me now. Kiss me harder.”

Collapsing against Hannibal, he moaned as what seemed like a hundred kisses and bites were left all over his neck and shoulders, and Hannibal went on stroking and caressing him with throaty sighs of wonderment.

“You’re the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen,” Will said heatedly, falling forward to kiss all over Hannibal’s chest. It was hard not to go into an elated sort of panic himself at the chance to finally do this, taste and touch to his heart’s content, until they had to go, run again, and when they were away...they could be together whenever they wanted. His heart soared.

“Want you so bad,” he confessed, licking already peaked rosy nipples, fingers tangled in Hannibal’s lovely, scratchy-soft chest hair.

Hannibal whimpered, so happy this time, delirious. Will found the long, ragged scars on his forearm and kissed them, too, licked at them with mischievous strokes and curls of his tongue that made Hannibal’s cock jerk untouched. Mouth watering, Will crawled down the bed and lapped at Hannibal’s thick, uncut erection, making up for his lack of experience in this type of thing with a great deal of greedy enthusiasm. Hannibal clamped his hands tight in Will’s hair and groaned so loudly that Will grinned up at him, “Shhh, a noise complaint could get us caught. Bad boy.”

“Make me behave,” Hannibal answered with a cheeky smile, staring at Will’s flushed face and his lips, shining with saliva and pre-cum. Hannibal looked at Will as if he hung every star in the night sky, as if he wanted nothing more than to freeze this moment forever because he couldn’t imagine anything being better or more worth waiting and suffering for.

Then it got so much better. Will put a pillow under his ass and began rimming him with the same amateur enthusiasm, but throwing himself into the endeavor completely, so that his wild lapping, sucking and kissing had Hannibal crying out coarsely, finally biting his own hand to quiet himself.

“I want so, so much to be inside of you,” Will said when he rose back up again to look into Hannibal’s eyes. He cupped his face and said in the same soothing, reassuring, centering tone, “Do you want it? Want me to fuck you, baby?”

“Yes, Will, please,” Hannibal begged, clinging again.

Will stroked his relaxed opening, then fucked him looser with two fingers, plunging in and out of silky, squeezing depths that made his own cock throb with painful need. It was a scandalous, rapturous spectacle, to watch his own fingers rocking into the tight, slick entrance. Another quick, strong shiver of pleasure shot through his body at the sight.

“Like having me inside you?” Will’s tone was guttural, shameless.

“I want all of you.” Hannibal kept his eyes locked on Will’s as he reached down and gave a skillful, loving stroke to Will’s cock. “Don’t make me wait.”

It was easy, like sinking into a dream, but Will knew he’d never been more awake. He pressed inside Hannibal, clutching his lover’s shapely thigh and devouring his lips in more kisses that helped him swallow every one of the killer’s sharp moans.

“You feel incredible,” he smiled when he had to stop kissing to be able to breathe and keep controlling his thrusts, which he purposefully kept long, firm and deep, the way he knew Hannibal needed it. Certain aspects of sex were obviously different with a man, but love made Will a quick study; he wanted this to be good for Hannibal, *needed* finally to show how he felt.

What he wanted, as Hannibal cupped his face in the kitchen that night he earned a bleeding smile with his betrayal of indecision -- now he had it, at last.

“We feel incredible...together,” Hannibal rasped, still letting out soft groans of bliss with every sleek drag of Will’s long, powerful cock inside him.

Will grinned, “We’re one,” and they laughed euphorically together, then he thrust harder and faster while Hannibal gasped, shifting his hips up desperate to meet Will’s every move.

Will knew exactly where he wanted to come; it wasn’t like he had not been secretly, ashamedly fantasizing about this moment for what seemed like ages. Hannibal was his obsession; of course he had thought about every detail of this, never expecting the dream to come true. He burst in an exuberant, plentifully warm, sticky white splatter all over Hannibal’s hairy belly, continuing to rove his hand over his cock until he had wrung every minuscule drop of pleasurable sensation from his own body.

Hannibal was panting, staring in wanton desperation at Will while the younger man trailed his fingers through the mess on the softest area on his lower stomach. With a smile, Will brought a taste up to Hannibal’s lips, and quickly moaned at the way the killer licked it up, then sucked his fingers. He knew Hannibal would ask for nothing more, but he had so much to give now; he was a door swinging open after a lifetime of miserable, locked-in deprivation, and this was their dream.

“I wanna taste you too,” he murmured, and sucked Hannibal off to a fast, harsh orgasm, loving the bittersweet taste of release soon spilling over his tongue.

Hannibal’s hips spasmed in an uncontrollable ecstasy, and he stroked his fingers through Will’s curls as if he was clinging to a life preserver while fighting the deep, swirling pull of a stormy sea. Here was home.

Will bit his lover’s thigh, unable to fully stop tasting and provoking, marking his claim. Hannibal tumbled them over suddenly, pressing Will to the sweat-dampened sheets on his back, staring down at him in disbelief.

“Will,” Hannibal said urgently, “I love you. I love you.”

And Will didn’t know which part had Hannibal so anxious again; the full realization of loving Will, the surrender into the chaos of that emotion, or the fact that Will loved him back, that they were both here, clinging together sticky with each other, hot and breathing hard, hearts sealed together in a thudding promise. It was all the same, and it would all be okay now.

“Shh, I know, baby.” Will pulled him down, and Hannibal snuggled into his chest, kissing over his heart. “I know. Rest now. We’ll finish everything else in a couple hours.”

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They took turns sleeping, still capable of being sensible despite the way their passion had suddenly overtaken them. Will woke Hannibal the next morning and they shared a few sleepy kisses before the older man tucked him in, promising to finish the dye job on his hair and forage them up some breakfast.

Hannibal found the motel undisturbed by any sign of police or FBI presence, so he paid for another night’s stay and walked across the street to the Burger King, grateful it was breakfast hours still. He would gladly accept a plate of greasy scrambled eggs and bacon over a patty of mystery meat dubiously labeled a “burger.”

As it turned out, he was forced to settle for something called a “Croissant-wich,” along with two small bags of “hash browns,” little jugs of cold orange juice, and cups of hot coffee all expertly wedged by his server into a styrofoam tray. He was therefore able to cross the street again with the array of unfortunate but helpful food, wondering distantly what sort of sight he must be. Decked out in a loose blue flannel shirt and grey jogging pants a la Walmart, with red sneakers and short raven hair, he certainly wasn’t too likely to be recognized as serial killer Hannibal the Cannibal in his current guise.

“I’ve brought food,” he said in rousing Will. “You should have some while it’s warm, then sleep more if you need it.”

“Mmm,” Will sighed, sitting up in bed with an adorably rumpled demeanor. He was still naked, his curls riotous as he slid his glasses onto his nose and then pecked Hannibal’s cheek. “Starving.”

After they ate, Will opted to stay awake, so they showered, then sat on the bed completing each other’s disguises, carefully placing colored contacts (Will: dark brown; Hannibal: bottle-green) into each other’s eyes. Hannibal trimmed Will's hair, preparing to cut it down close to his head then shave it in a buzz cut style.

“I hate to do this,” Hannibal frowned, capturing a glossy brown curl in his hand before it could flutter to the floor. Will’s handsome face was only more startlingly attractive due to the shorter hairstyle, but to lose a single one of those gorgeous curls was a sin as far as he was concerned.

“I’ll make a deal with you,” Will proposed cheerfully. He shifted closer to Hannibal and climbed into his lap for a kiss. “When we get to Cuba, I’ll let my hair grow out again. And *you* let yours go grey, for me.”

“Any other requests?” Hannibal inquired, half-expecting Will to want explanations, apologies, gestures of recompense for past abuse and injury. He would not blame his love if this were the case; he had let go of his own composed refusal to admit vulnerability, and found himself feeling so remarkably free and refreshed in result. Therefore, he was quite ready and willing to offer anything in the world which Will might ask of him.

But Will only kissed him again, slow and sweet, before answering, “Just tell me it’s you and me now.”

Hannibal nuzzled his nose into Will’s with a soft laugh of contentment. The FBI could have barged into the room then and gunned them both down if they liked, and Hannibal would have died happily. “It’s you and me.”

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Cuba, One Year Later.

“Happy Anniversary, Will,” Hannibal smiled, looking up as his husband arrived at the dinner table which he had so carefully arranged in their large garden.

In the twilight, the pretty, verdant environment was even more enchanting, alight with vibrant notes of floral sweetness, clustered with bright blossoms.

Hannibal had dressed simply for the occasion in a white shirt with the collar open and a pair of beige slacks, his silvery hair shining in the candlelight. He’d long since found that life with Will in their new beginning inspired a more relaxed mood in him. Before this time, he had never really let himself simply enjoy life without trying to control every facet of his environment. Emotional chaos had been good for him, supremely healthy.

From the corpse of their latest victim, Hannibal had created a sumptuous entree, Rack of Ill-Advised Thief with a Cherry and Merlot Glaze, as he called it. He had grinned smugly to himself while cooking, remembering the idiocy of the thief who had tried to rob and assault his lover the night before. Little did the fool know he had chosen to attack the fiercest and most brutal killer who it had ever been Hannibal’s privilege to witness in action. Will only killed in self-defense or to enact justice upon the most despicable criminals, and the kills were few and far between, for the benefit of their continued cover. It was only the fourth dead body left in their wake since arriving in Cuba, and Hannibal was very pleased that the incident happened to coincide with tonight’s special occasion.

“Will?” Hannibal repeated. He straightened from his position carefully lighting the tall, dark pink candles on the table. “Is something wrong?”

Will stood at the garden gate in a gorgeous blue suit, hesitating with a stricken expression.

Oh, dear. Hannibal glanced over the meticulously arranged table, wondering if he had got something wrong, quickly trying to determine what the mistake might be.

"No, it's just that…" Will looked nearly sick with sudden emotion which Hannibal struggled to identify, even as close as they were now, still more like one person than two. He had never seen his Will quite like this though, pale and stunned, face otherwise devoid of feeling.

Then Will's face crumpled as tears began streaming from his eyes. Shocked, Hannibal went to him quickly, taking that beautiful, forlorn face into his hands, struggling to understand.

"Will, have I done something wrong? We can change any of the plans for this evening to suit your preferences, of course."

Will laughed confusedly and clasped Hannibal's hands, kissing his fingers. "No, it's not that, everything is beautiful and perfect, including you."

"Then what…"

"Sometimes I remember it, out of nowhere, like a hard slap in the face," Will replied. "The night we left, the night I found you crying in my yard. If I hadn't come outside at the right time, I never would have known. We might never have been together like this, and I can't stand to think of that. I'm still afraid of it somehow, as if that's really what happened, or...as if one day I'll lose you."

"Never," Hannibal declared with husky vehemence, kissing Will's tear-salted lips, roving his fingers through the twining curls which had grown back out so lusciously since that hasty motel haircut. "You'll never lose me. We live together, we die together. No one can ever part us. I promise you that as I promised you my eternal devotion on our wedding day."

"Show…" Will sobbed, grabbed Hannibal into a tight hug, and trembled. "Show me."

***

The bedroom had been transformed into a warm haven of romance, as much as the dinner table. A trail of black rose petals led the way to the big four-poster bed. Hannibal had purchased new sheets, silky and gold, and had perfumed them in Will's favorite notes of bergamot and lavender.

"You're so sentimental," Will sniffed as Hannibal lowered him to the soft embrace of pretty bedding.

"Only for you," Hannibal smiled, slowly undressing him, kissing every small, lovely swath of skin he revealed. "I want you to know it very plainly, my love."

"I know it," Will answered, pressing their hands together, their golden wedding bands gleaming in the candlelight. "In a way, I always knew. Yet I can't ever seem to get enough."

"That's music to my ears." Hannibal nosed into his neck, then bit him with gradually building insistence.

Will tugged on his shirt and bit his own lip, legs coming up to cage Hannibal's hips tightly. They kept each other's bodies covered in claiming bruises and suck marks, unable to let a day pass without indulging in demanding, rough and tender love-making. Hannibal dipped his fingers into the bucket of champagne beside the bed and fished out an ice cube. Will gave a long, aching moan as his husband dragged the cold cube down his naked body, circling his nipples, then tracing the smiling scar on his stomach. His hips shuddered, lips already kiss-swollen and calling out Hannibal's name.

Hannibal placed his attention carefully on all of Will's favorite places to be touched and kissed. Especially, the scars which his Hannibal had given him, both old and new. They never failed to cause Will countless quivering whimpers when properly stimulated, and Hannibal did not spare his husband a single moment's depth of pleasure. He took Will with a sweetly tormenting slowness that left the younger man shaking and weak. When Hannibal finally slid inside him, it took both their breath away and restored their life as it always did, making them whole, proving it was real.

He pressed Will firmly to the sheets and fucked into him, solid and hard in his strokes. Will grabbed his hips and watched him in an adoring haze, high on every thrust bringing Hannibal deeper to him, where he belonged. In finding his release, Hannibal shuddered, his breath hot and heavy against Will's neck, hips rocking aggressively, nothing soft in his tenderness, only raw, rough taking. Nothing could be more revealing; he could be gentle at first, but when he took Will fully, his restraint always shattered.

"There you go, baby," Will sighed, enraptured.

When he was able to properly move again in the afterglow of awe-inspiring pleasure, Hannibal grinned at his husband and presented him with one of the anniversary gifts he had purchased, a large vibrating dildo. The device was immediately put to excellent and thorough use, edging Will for another hour between fucking and Hannibal going down on him, then using ice cubes to drive him even crazier with the urgent need to come.

When Will finally climaxed, it caused a full-body tremor and a moan that nearly escalated to a scream, making Hannibal beam with pride and joy at his husband's beauty and resilience to his wickedest schemes.

They fed each other the fancy dinner and dessert soon afterwards, sitting in bed murmuring sweet and evil plans for the future. Hannibal loved the way they felt with their legs tangled and Will's champagne kisses warm on his lips. He was grateful, infinitely grateful for whatever mechanism of strength had finally broken down inside him that night in the bitter winter cold, hiding outside Will's house. It was the same terror which had only engulfed him on one previous occasion, the night of Mischa's death. It was the soul-demolishing fear of losing the only person who helped him understand what it felt like to love and be loved.

Only by letting go of his controlling nature had he finally opened himself up to the sort of happiness that was meant to last forever. Only by the grace of Will's forgiveness and remarkable ability to evolve had it all been possible.

Often he would speak to Will of these matters, but never in full depth; he would intimate it in fits and starts, unable to find words to properly convey his strange, horrific journey and how

much love had changed him, given him the ability to truly breathe and inhabit his own body with ease and joy. Without the need to constantly orchestrate every minute detail of everyone else's lives to fit some ongoing, conniving scheme, he was renewed to embrace his own life. It wasn't that his conscience had been restored to him; he had no need of one, now or ever; Will had given him his heart back.

"I don't know how to thank you," he murmured as they nestled sleepily, on the verge of deep rest, their limbs pleasure-heavy and exhausted. He breathed Will in and found his own scent mixed with his husband's, natural body heat, sex and perfumes blended inextricably. It reassured him, centered him once again as Will did by holding him and answering as he always did, softly, patiently: "Just love me."

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